Mahadev Desai

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HE LIVES

(*By Sarojini Naidu*)

On the eve of Mahadev Desai's fourth death-anniversary, my heart and mind are besieged by both pleasant and poignant recollections of the gifted and beloved being whose friendship was a privilege and whose comradeship a delight.

He was only twentyfive when Mahadev with the whole world before him, felt the magic call of the Mahatma's voice. I saw him when he first came bringing all the gold, frankincense and myrrh of his splendid youth and ideals, his rare literary talent and scholarship, his fervent patriotism, to lay at the feet of his great Master whom he served for twentyfive years with flawless devotion and fidelity.

How varied were his functions and duties in the course of his love discipleship to the Mahatma!

Innumerable pictures of Mahadev pass before my eyes in a swift pageant of memory: Mahadev as the leading inmate of Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati, Wardha, Sevagram; Mahadev in laughing mood, the genial centre of an admiring circle, revelling in his lively wit and subtle humour; Mahadev with bent brows at his literary labours, translating beautiful thoughts, his own or his Guru's, into beautiful language; Mahadev in a gray shawl climbing the Viceregal steps in Delhi charged with a delicate political mission; Mahadev in London accompanying the Mahatma to the royal reception at the Buckingham Palace, a picturesque figure in his dazzling white Khadi; Mahadev with sweet and patient courtesy interpreting to groups of foreign pilgrims from Europe and America, the Near and the Far East, the lovely gospel of his Master whose inmost spirit he reflected as in a crystal mirror.

Most moving and enduring of all memories is the manner of his passing and the hours that followed his tragic end. Since the day of our arrests on the historic ninth of August and our removal to the Aga Khan Palace in Poona which was our prison, he seemed to be burdened and harassed by a prescient fear. The Mahatma's oft-repeated intention of a fast unto death might suddenly materialize in detention. On the night of the 14th August when all was still in our prison palace, Mahadev sat in my room till late talking with a strange sense of urgency as if time were limited. His conversation was a kind of brief and candid autobiographical review of his life, his experiences of his dearly cherished wife and son, but his main theme of course, was Mahatma Gandhi who to him was the living symbol of the deity. He seemed to be haunted by a curious and pressing sense of fatality that night. On the next morning he seemed to be miraculously restored to a buoyant sense of hope. He walked in the garden with Gandhiji and when he returned to the house he said to me: "I don't know why I am so happy today." Shortly after he came to my room with a jest on his lips to meet the doctor who had asked for him. In a few minutes still smiling, he said, "My head is reeling", and almost before we were aware of it, suddenly he passed away, beyond response to the voices that cried to him to wake up and speak.

How can my pen find words of sufficient grace or tenderness to describe the last ceremony and rites which were performed by the stricken Master for his most beloved disciple. With trembling hands Gandhiji washed the marble-cold body unaided, anointed it with sandal paste and decorated it with flowers whispering, "Mahadev, I thought you would do this for me. Now I have to do it for you . . ." In the golden August afternoon of the 15th a mournful little procession followed Mahadev's bier to the improvised burning ground in a corner of the palace grounds . . . What at dawn had been a living flame became at sunset a pyramid of smouldering silver-gray ashes, soon to be scattered on the breast of a nearby sacred river.

Mahadev has vanished from our sight, but is Mahadev dead in reality? Does he not live in the love of his Master and the heart of the country which he served with such rich sacrifice and achievement?

12-8-'46

IN MEMORIAM

(*By C. R.*)

It is now four years since the passing away of dear Mahadev Desai. Yet we have not been able to overcome the grief or the loss. Gandhiji is an essential figure in our life today, and we feel he has been maimed in an important limb. There is not a day that we pass through but something acutely reminds us of Mahadev's not being with us. He was one of those men whom no one could hope to replace. But in many cases, we are able to forget the dead through being absorbed in what others are doing. But in Mahadev's case, his service to the public through his devoted service to Gandhiji, was of that essential character, which does not admit of any kind of replacement.

12-8-'46

WEEKLY LETTER

"You have called mine a negative attitude," remarked a friend to Gandhiji. "But I am quite clear in my own mind. I do not mind the Congress High Command carrying on negotiations with the Cabinet Mission. But suppose the negotiations fail. What then? The British Government is prepared with its plan of action in that case. But we are not. It is my belief that we shall have to go through another struggle before freedom can be won. I find that you have a revolutionary mentality. I do not like *himsa* anymore than you. It is bad. My goal is the same as yours. Show a sure non-violent way of achieving our goal of Independence within a definite period and I shall most willingly follow you. In a way I do believe in *ahimsa*. A repetition of the 1932-37 pattern of struggle won't do. The leaders are put behind the bars at the very commencement of the struggle and then all contact between them and the masses ceases. It is not fair that we should sit in jails in comparative comfort and safety and expect the people to face the fire. The leaders should bear the brunt. Let there be, say, a hundred people with your name on the top followed by those of other front-rank Congress leaders to start a chain fast unto death, after giving due notice to the Government and, I am sure, before the list is exhausted India will be free." The interviewer added that he himself would in that event, be prepared to abandon his own programme and join the fast. His complaint was that no top-ranking Congressman with the exception of Jairamdas Daulatram had yet received a bullet, although perhaps hundreds had died in recent years of bullets and lathi charges at the hands of the police and the military.

Taking the last point first, Gandhiji replied: "If and when the call comes to fast unto death, I will do so irrespective of others joining or not. Fasting unto death is the last and the most potent weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha. It is a sacred thing. But it must be accepted with all its implications. It is not the fast itself but what it implies that matters. Have not even hypocrites been known to make a pretence of fasting? Such fasts are a plague and a nuisance. They do not count. If I fast and you can send a hundred or even ten men who would undertake it with a pure heart, I shall be happy. But such a fast should not be undertaken inside the prison."

"What I mean is that mere jail-going is not enough. People should remain outside and face repression. Nine young boys faced the bullets and died before the Secretariat at Patna. Think how it would have electrified the masses, if it had been Rajendra Babu instead of these poor boys," resumed the interviewer.

"I agree with you there. I have said before that merely filling the prisons is not enough. It is only the jail-going of the pure in heart that can bring Swaraj. In fact in 1922, my instructions were that no one was to follow me in jail and that all should spin and carry out in full the constructive programme. The eighteen-fold constructive programme, if carried out in its entirety will, in my opinion, render civil disobedience unnecessary. The people of Bardoli in 1922 solemnly promised to carry out the constructive programme, to banish untouchability and liquor from their midst and to make Khadi universal to the exclusion of mill cloth imported or Indian. They have failed to fulfil their pledge up till now."

"You say jail-going does not end the fight," proceeded the arguer. "We wanted to agitate for the abolition of the classification of political prisoners by the upper class prisoners voluntarily reducing themselves to 'C' class by refusing to accept privileged treatment. But some said that it was against your ideology. You wanted people to remain in the class in which they were placed."

"That is hardly correct," replied Gandhiji. "In fact I do not want even the distinction between the political and non-political prisoners. I stand for fair and humane treatment of all prisoners. But mine has been a lonely voice. Even when power was in our hands, we failed to abolish classification. I am the originator of jail-going as part of Satyagraha. My jail-going was born out of *ahimsa* and *ahimsa* and privilege go ill together. I have fought the Government from inside the jail. As it is, today all sorts of people go to jail. Inside the jail, they behave anyhow, even apologize and come out. Jail-going has become a farce."

THE STRIKE FEVER

"What should be done about the strikes?" The Premier of one of the Congress Provinces was discussing the present strike fever with Gandhiji the other day. He lamented the unwarranted prolongation of a particular strike.

"Does it mean that the Congress has lost its hold on the people?" asked Gandhiji.

"No, but the Congress has not spoken with one voice and that has created confusion in the public mind."

"If the strike is unjustified on merits, it should be unequivocally denounced," suggested Gandhiji.

"By whom?"

"By the Congress, of course."

"What do you mean by the Congress?" asked the friend. "The Working Committee might have. It has not."

"By Congress, I mean the 400 millions of India speaking through the Working Committee," replied Gandhiji.

A militant suffragette who happend to be present here joined in: "But the Working Committee no longer speaks with one voice, thanks to your choice which you have imposed upon the country. You have stifled democracy," she remarked.

Gandhiji explained that the present Working Committee was not his choice but that of the Congress President who had been democratically elected. His part consisted mainly in persuading the Congress President to exercise his choice unfettered by consideration of personalities or the old tradition. The present Working Committee could not stay there for a day if it did not reflect the mind of democracy. The only condition was that democracy should be wide awake and functioning. As an illustration, he mentioned the case of Mr. Churchill who, in spite of his unique victories and achievements, had been set aside by the British people the moment, he ceased to reflect the nation's mind. "The return of labour to power in such overwhelming strength is a great event in the history

of political democracy. It has a lesson which we would do well to take to heart," he said.

Another in the company suggested that some sinister influence was at the back of the present strike fever. The motive was not economic but political. What was the remedy ?

" You should reason with the strikers, " replied Gandhiji, " warn them of the danger and resign if they or the people at large do not listen to you."

" But we owe a responsibility to the country. Shall we be justified in abandoning the country to sinister influences, who in fact want the Congress to go out of office and want to create chaos ?" persisted the friend.

" That is the only way in which democracy can function," replied Gandhiji. " It will educate the people. Sinister influences will not flourish if popular support is not lacking. Once the people realize that the Congress won't carry on its rule by force, they will cease to act thoughtlessly or in an irresponsible manner and the sinister influence will be sterilized."

Oh ! For Some Respite

" It is to be seen what Sevagram does for me," exclaimed Gandhiji, with a sigh when I saw him last at Uruli, groaning under the burden he was carrying. " It is, however, not the burden that matters, " he added, "but absence of detachment. I have not yet learnt sufficiently to leave things to God. But that must not become an additional cause for worry, if one has a living faith in God." Thanks to the Working Committee meeting, there is an unusual influx of visitors in the Ashram at all hours of the day. They surround his hut and have forced him to put up curtains in front of his doors in order to escape their eager attention. He took advantage of their presence at the evening prayer on the day of his arrival, to drive home a lesson. The day's sacrificial spinning by the Ashram inmates is recorded after the evening prayer as part of the daily routine. "If I ask you how many of you spin, I am afraid, very few hands will go up," he remarked addressing the visitors. "You have just heard the Ashram inmates giving an account of the day's spinning at the end of the prayers. The reason is that spinning has become a part and parcel of the Ashram prayer. The conception of spinning as sacrifice has been linked with the idea of God, the reason being that we believe that in the charkha and what it stands for, lies the only hope of salvation of the poor." He had come to realize that it was difficult to earn one's livelihood through the charkha, but the villagers could easily spin for their own clothes. Because they had not realized the self-help principle in the matter of clothing, they showed a deplorable lack of it in other things too. It stultified even agriculture, so that they suffered destitution in the midst of plenty. "We have plenty of fertile land where we can grow fruits, vegetables and other foodstuffs. But we do not make full use of our opportunity. Instead of eating fresh, whole foods, we eat them denatured. We grow cereals and eat them after converting them practically into dust. God has given us everything we need and He has endowed us with intellect and the use of two hands. We could raise our food, grow cotton and prepare our own clothes, rear cattle and supply milk to our children. Yet we go hungry and naked. Our children are ill-fed and undernourished. Could there be anything more tragic ?"

He compared the cities with the villages. The villages could subsist by themselves in regard to all the necessaries of life. Not so the cities. They could neither grow their own food, nor produce cotton for cloth, nor keep cattle without the help and co-operation of the villages. And yet he knew of no village in India which was today self-sufficient. Sevagram should have been such a village. But it was still far from it. Our villagers were lazy and lethargic and killed time by gambling etc. If they tried to leave the wheel and concentrate on land exclusively, he warned them, they would soon find that it was not practicable. On the contrary, resuscitation of the wheel would help to revitalize agriculture by making them shed their inertia and apathy.

Referring to the unthinking admiration of the visitors who had literally laid siege to his hut the whole day, he described how it had driven him to desperation almost. He was sick of it. It could do no good either to him or to them. True admiration consisted in carrying out the wishes of the person one admired, not merely staring at him and thus wasting his time and one's own.

A Crucial Decision

A big step in educational reform was taken the other day when Shri Sriman Narayan Agarwal, the Principal and the Management of the Seksaria College of Commerce, Wardha, decided to make Marathi the medium of instruction in their college. To formally inaugurate the change, a function was held on the 9th instant, when several distinguished visitors, including the Prime Minister of C. P. with several of his colleagues and the Vice-Chancellor of the Nagpur University attended. The occasion was marked by an influx into Wardha of nearly ten thousand visitors from outside who threatened to throw the entire rationing system of the place out of gear. Originally the function was to have been held in the College Hall in the afternoon, when Gandhiji was to have addressed them. But the crowd was so undisciplined and unmanageable that the attempt had to be given up and Gandhiji addressed the gathering later at 6 p. m. in the open air. The idea was to combine the function with the public evening prayer.

Shri Ravishankar Shukla describing the etiology of the reform revealed how the Congress Ministry before it resigned office in 1940, had appointed a committee to go into the question of imparting university education through the mother tongue. The Committee had reported favourably. But in the meantime the Congress having gone out of office, its report was pigeon-holed by the Sec. 93 administration. It was only on the return of the Congress Ministry to office that it was unearthed. The Vice-Chancellor of the Nagpur University, in the course of his remarks significantly remarked that by 1949 it might be possible to make the mother tongue the medium of the entire university education in C. P.

Foundations of Freedom

Giving a severe castigation to the unruly crowd that had indulged in window smashing and would have smashed in the roof too if they could, in the afternoon, Gandhiji remarked that it augured ill for the Independence to come. The Working Committee

which was holding its meeting in their city was considering how to win Independence for the people of India in the shortest time. It was not labouring for a change of masters. If the masses wanted to enjoy Independence, they had first to learn the secret of observing voluntary discipline. Otherwise discipline would have to be imposed upon them by the powers that be. That would not be Independence but its negation. Every people got the Government they deserved. If they indulged in hooliganism, so would the Government and its officials in the name of law and order. The result would not be freedom or Independence but a balancing of anarchies, each trying to keep the other in check. Voluntary discipline was the first requisite of corporate freedom. If the people were well-behaved, the Government officials would become their true servants. Otherwise they would ride on their necks, not without a semblance of justification. During the Boer War he had seen thousands of soldiers perform a noiseless march through a dense, topical jungle in the middle of the night, in pitch darkness for not even a match-stick was to be struck to light a cigarette, lest it should betray their movements to the enemy. The whole troop formation moved like one man in perfect silence and harmony. The need for discipline for a nation on its march towards Independence was infinitely greater. Without it, *Ramarajya* which meant the kingdom of God on earth would remain an empty dream.

The Principal and the Management of the Seksaria College had taken a big step in deciding to make the mother tongue the medium of instruction in their college. But the reform would be still-born if they were lazy or if the public did not co-operate.

A fear had been expressed, observed Gandhiji, that the propagation of *Rashtrabhasha* or the national tongue would prove inimical to the provincial languages. That fear was rooted in ignorance. The present step of the Seksaria College was a living refutation of that suspicion. Provincial tongues provided the sure foundation on which the edifice of the national tongue should rest. The two were intended to complement, not supplant each other.

He deprecated the suggestion that it would need a lot of research and preparation to enable them to impart technical education through the medium of the mother tongue. Those who argued like that, were unaware of the rich treasure of expressions and idioms that were buried in the dialects of our villages. In Gandhiji's opinion there was no need to go to Sanskrit or Persian in search for many expressions. He had been in Champaran and he had found that the village folk there, could fully express themselves with ease and without the help of a single foreign expression or idiom. As an illustration of their resourcefulness, he mentioned the word *hava gadi* which they had coined to denote a motor car. He challenged university scholars to coin a more poetic expression than that for a motor car.

One of the speakers had remarked that the reform would mean a saving of at least three years to the alumni of the college. But Gandhiji was of opinion that the saving in time and labour would be even greater. "Moreover," he added, "what they learnt through the mother tongue, they would easily be able to communicate to their mothers and sisters at home and thereby bring the latter into line with themselves. Woman had been described as man's better half. Today there was a hiatus between the thought world of men and women respectively in India, thanks to the intrusion of the foreign medium. Our womenfolk were backward and ignorant with the result that India was today like a patient with paralysis of the better side. India could not realize her full stature unless that handicap was removed.

Sevagram, PYARELAL
11-8-'46

HANDLING MILK IN ENGLAND

The average Britisher lives up to the age of 60 as against less than 30, which is the average expectation of life in India. Infant mortality in Britain is about 50 per thousand as against over 150 in India. The death rate in Britain is about 12 as against over 24 in India. There are several factors, which contribute to this difference, one of these being that Britain is better fed than India. And no wonder, for the pre-war income per head in Britain was £100 or say 1300 Rs. as against 65 Rs. in India, i. e. over 20 times as much. The daily consumption of milk per head in Britain was 39 oz. as against 7 oz. in India, and increased during the war by 28 p. c. Not only is the quantity of milk consumed in Britain greater than in India, but in Britain they handle it with care, while we in India are slovenly and negligent. The following passage from E. J. S. Lay's *Citizenship* (MacMillan) describes the elaborate precautions taken at a convalescent home in England:

> "The cows on coming in to be milked pass from the field to a firm platform of concrete, where they cannot be splashed with dirt. They enter the 'milking byre' by a door other than that through which the pails of milk will later be carried, and this door is so placed that the cows never cross any place, over which milk has to be transported. The byre is scrupulously clean with hard floors and walls and large windows above and at the sides. Each cow is carefully washed before milking begins, and a flow of clean water runs in the gutters of the byre. The milkman wears special clean clothes and takes almost as much care to be clean-handed for his task, as a hospital nurse. He milks into a pail with a curved top, into which no dirt or dust can fall.
>
> "This pail of milk is now carried across a yard which cows never enter. It is poured into a large receptacle which stands high up on the wall of the byre and is reached by a short ladder. Thence it flows through a number of layers of close filtering material and passes by a pipe (which is sterilized after each period of use) to the interior of the dairy where it drips over a refrigerator and is received by way of another strainer into a large can. It is now ready to be taken across to the home."

V. G. D.

QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

THE CENTRAL POINT MISSED

The following questions have been given by a British Military Officer who read with great interest the article in the 'Harijan' of July 28, 1946, on 'Independence'. The Officer is a military engineer, widely travelled in America and Europe, and has seen with his own eyes the horrors of the war in Germany.

Q. 1. In this ideal State (there is no doubt that it is ideal) how can one be sure that outside aggression can be avoided? If the State has no modern army with modern weapons which are the product of the machine age, an invading army with modern weapons could overrun the country and subject the inhabitants to slavery.

A. The questioner, who claims to have read and re-read my article carefully and says he has liked it and is a military man, has evidently missed the central point of my article, viz. that however small a nation or even a group may be, it is able, even as the individual, provided that it has one mind as also the will and the grit to defend its honour and self-respect against a whole world in arms. Therein consists the matchless strength and beauty of the unarmed. That is non-violent defence which neither knows nor accepts defeat at any stage. Therefore, a nation or a group which has made non-violence its final policy, cannot be subjected to slavery even by the atom bomb.

WHY IN WANT OF FOOD?

Q. 2. India at the present time cannot grow enough food for its population. To buy food from abroad, India must sell other goods to pay for it, and in order to sell such goods, India must produce at competitive prices which, in my opinion, cannot be done without modern machines. How can this be done, unless the machine replaces manual labour?

A. The statement in the first sentence of the question is wholly wrong. I hold, in spite of opinions expressed to the contrary, that India is able at the present moment to grow enough food. I have previously stated the condition for growing enough food, viz. that the Government at the head should be National and a Government that knows its business and is capable of dealing sternly with all profiteering, black-marketing and, worst of all, laziness of mind and body.

The second part of the question really falls to the ground if my answer to the first is correct. But for the sake of dismissing the plea on behalf of modern machines as against human labour of which there is plenty in a land like India, I would say that if all the able-bodied millions work with one mind and with zeal, they could compete on their own terms with any nation, however well-equipped it may be with modern machines. The questioner should not forget that modern machines have up till now gone side by side with the exploitation of the machineless nations, dubbed weak. I use the participle 'dubbed' because they will refuse to be weak, immediately they realize the fact that they are even at the present moment stronger than the nation equipped with the most modern weapons and machinery.

SWARAJ THROUGH SPINNING

A Congressman writes:

> Q. "You will perhaps agree that in spite of considerable publicity spinning and weaving have not yet found favour with the public to the extent to which they should have done. I think if every Congress Committee — at least those of the big cities — starts a sort of coaching class for the public for this purpose, it can do immense good. Many people — particularly the poor — do not take to spinning because they do not know spinning and weaving, what type of wheels are more convenient to use and give greater output, how these are properly operated upon, how best they should dispose of or utilize the yarn thus produced etc. If once or twice a week, some such classes are undertaken after proper publicity, and people are instructed in this technique by practical demonstrations, things should improve much. At least the experiment is worth a trial by the Congress. Even if regular classes are not held but a group or groups of experts of this technique undertake a tour and give demonstrations and instructions to the public for some days in each city, it can serve the purpose to a considerable extent."

Questions like the above often come to me from Congressmen. Since this is exhaustive, I reproduce it as it is. The signature is undecipherable. Therefore, I am unable to say to which province the questioner belongs. Surely it would have been appropriate if the writer had been good enough to frame his letter in Hindustani. The vast mass of Congressmen who are not on the Congress register but who are more Congressmen than the registered ones, do not know English and those who do, care less for spinning than for being on the Congress register, for reasons they know and which I need not specify. There is, however, a great deal in what the writer says. If all Congress offices became institutions for teaching the art of spinning from the anterior and posterior processes right up to the manufacture of khadi, I am quite clear that the face of the villages would be changed and Swaraj would be ushered in through the effort of the masses. I have shown in these columns, how it will be ushered in. These lines are written to emphasize the point made by the correspondent.

Sevagram, 8-8-'46

How to Think of God

A correspondent writes:

> "You say that the rule should be that during prayers, everyone should sit with closed eyes and think of nothing but God. The question arises as to how and in what form we have to think of God?"

True meditation consists in closing the eyes and ears of the mind to all else, except the object of one's devotion. Hence the closing of eyes during prayers is an aid to such concentration. Man's conception of God is naturally limited. Each one has, therefore, to think of Him as best appeals to him, provided that the conception is pure and uplifting.

Sevagram, 10-8-'46 M. K. G.

A KHADI LOVER'S COMPLAINT

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A Gujarati Khadi lover living in South India writes as follows:

"In the Khadi Bhandar here, it is hard to get cotton, spindles, charkhas and their accessories. I have up till now been carrying on with my own cotton. The slivers from cotton bought here were not at all good. I discovered it was of poor quality after I had bought it. I found hand-carding (*tunai*) of it difficult and could not get anyone here to teach me either.

"I have just given my full quota of self-spun and self-carded yarn for 1946 to be woven into cloth. At first one could procure coupons for self-spun yarn and buy a certain amount of Khadi with it. The yarn given in is to be woven into *saris* and *dhotis*. How are we to buy cloth for our other requirements of underwear, sheets, towels etc.? I went to the Bhandar recently and they demanded the same number of hanks as the amount of rupees the cloth was worth. In addition I was told I had to be a member of the Bhandar. I spend 2 to 2½ hours daily in carding and spinning. If I can spare any more time, I devote it also to this work. But, in spite of all my labour, I shall never be able to produce enough yarn for my requirements. What am I to do? The fact that I am un-acquainted with the language is another difficulty. It would be easier if all the rules regarding Khadi were written up in Hindustani. Moreover, it seems impossible to get anything done without outside influence. Is one to call it one's misfortune or part of our nature? One needs some backing even to buy a spindle, to say nothing about a charkha. If the Charkha Sangh people themselves do not realize what difficulties one has to face in the matter of buying even small requirements, to whom can one turn for help?

"I spoke about this to a well-known Gujarati friend here. He got enraged. 'Gandhiji has constituted himself Viceroy. Why then should he listen to anyone? He does whatever comes into his head. Let him do so. We shall get Khadi from wherever we can and, what is more, we shall encourage un-certified Khadi. As for Pyarelalji, he only puts up to Gandhiji what he chooses and throws the rest into the waste paper basket.'"

The above angry criticism about my post does not need any comment, beyond saying that every worth-while letter is put up before me and that, if I were to be acquainted with or read every letter that comes, the whole of my time would be spent on the post and I would be rendered useless for my real work. But what has been said about Khadi demands consideration. That Sales Bhandars may disappear under the new scheme, only means that they should be converted into schools for teaching all the processes of Khadi. Therefore, cotton, charkhas, spindles and all other accessories of spinning, carding and ginning should certainly be available there. Above all the Khadi worker should be polite and obliging at all times. If he is not, it will mean the end of Khadi and it will be a tragedy if Khadi workers themselves were to be the cause of its death.

The criticism in the letter under reference can only be applicable to one or two Bhandars. This note is, therefore, only meant for those to whom it does apply. All such should early set their house in order.

Khadi wearers who spin regularly and give in their self-spun yarn for being woven into cloth should be, as they are, entitled to purchase against cash the amount of Khadi which, according to the A. I. S. A. rules, their above-mentioned yarn permits them to buy.

Sevagram, 6-8-'46 (From *Harijanbandhu*)

RAMANAMA AGAIN

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A friend sends me a letter received by him for an answer. The letter is long. I have only copied here the relevant part:

"India is in his blood, but why should he cause resentment among his countrymen who are not of his religious faith, by holding daily prayer meetings and chanting *Ramanama* (meaning the name of Rama, the Hindu God)? He should realize that India is full of manifold faiths and most of the conservatives are apt to mistake him (and this is one of the pleas of the Muslim League), if he openly goes on talking in the name of the Hindu Gods. One of his pet terms is the establishment of *Rama-Rajya* (the rule of Rama). What would a devout Muslim feel about this?"

I must repeat for the thousandth time that *Ramanama* is one of the many names for God. The same prayer meetings have recitations from the Quran and the Zend Avesta. Devout Muslims, for the very reason that they are devout, have never objected to the chant of *Ramanama*. *Ramanama* is not an idle chant. It is conceived as a mode of addressing the all pervasive God known to me, as to millions of Hindus, by the familiar name of *Ramanama*. 'Nama' at the end of Rama is the most significant part. It means the 'nama' without the Rama of history. Be that as it may, why should an open profession by me of my faith offend anybody, much less the Muslim League? No one is obliged to join these meetings and having joined is not obliged to take part in the chant. All that the visitors are expected to do is not to mar the harmony of the meeting and to tolerate the proceedings even when they are not in sympathy with any part.

As to the use of the phrase '*Rama-Rajya*,' why should it offend after my having defined its meaning many times? It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier Province or address predominantly Muslim audiences I would express my meaning to them by calling it Khudai Raj, while to a Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth. Any other mode would, for me, be self-suppression and hypocrisy.

Sevagram, 8-8-'46

WHAT A CHILD CAN TEACH US

(By M. K. Gandhi)

There is a little girl of five years of age in Madras named Aruna who, when I was there in January last, saw me spin and thereafter was seized with the desire to practise it. She is born in a home which has the khadi atmosphere. Her parents are not such as to force their child to do things. They are content to let her imbibe what she can, from the atmosphere surrounding her. When the child herself expressed a desire to practise spinning, they gladly gave her every encouragement. The result was that Aruna was able to produce one sliver after one day's labour and when she saw me spinning that sliver of her creation, her joy knew no bounds. I explained to her the defects in her first sliver and in order to remove these, her parents gave her every help. Since then the child has been making good slivers and spinning regularly. Thus this little one learnt two lessons at the same time, viz. to clean and card the cotton and make slivers and also to give to others the produce of her labour. Children often take money from their parents to give presents to others. Then the merit really accrues to the parents. It is a very different thing when the child gives out of the labour of its own hands in whatever form that be. And is that not the truest form of gift?

Sevagram, 9-8-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

IS GOD A PERSON OR FORCE?

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A friend from Baroda writes in English:

> "You ask us to pray to God to give light to the Whites in South Africa and strength and courage to the Indians there to remain steadfast to the end. A prayer of this nature can only be addressed to a person. If God is an all-pervading and all-powerful force, what is the point of praying to Him? He goes on with his work whatever happens."

I have written on this topic before. But as it is a question that crops up again and again in different languages, further elucidation is likely to help someone or the other. In my opinion, Rama, Rahaman, Ahurmazda, God or Krishna are all attempts on the part of man to name that invincible force which is the greatest of all forces. It is inherent in man, imperfect though he be, ceaselessly to strive after perfection. In the attempt he falls into reverie. And, just as a child tries to stand, falls down again and again and ultimately learns how to walk, even so man, with all his intelligence, is a mere infant as compared to the infinite and ageless God. This may appear to be an exaggeration but is not. Man can only describe God in his own poor language. The power we call God defies description. Nor does that power stand in need of any human effort to describe Him. It is man who requires the means whereby he can describe that Power which is vaster than the ocean. If this premise is accepted, there is no need to ask why we pray. Man can only conceive God within the limitations of his own mind. If God is vast and boundless as the ocean, how can a tiny drop like man imagine what He is? He can only experience what the ocean is like, if he falls into and is merged in it. This realization is beyond description. In Madame Blavatsky's language man, in praying, worships his own glorified self. He can truly pray, who has the conviction that God is within him. He who has not, need not pray. God will not be offended, but I can say from experience that he who does not pray is certainly a loser. What matters then whether one man worships God as Person and another as Force? Both do right according to their lights. None knows and perhaps never will know what is the absolutely proper way to pray. The ideal must always remain the ideal. One need only remember that God is the Force among all the forces. All other forces are material. But God is the vital force or spirit which is all-pervading, all-embracing and therefore beyond human ken.

Sevagram, 9-8-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

WHAT A FAST CAN SAVE

Indonesia has promised us 50,000 tons of rice
= 2,240×½ lakh lbs.
= 1,120 lakh lbs.
= 112 million lbs.

This is enough to feed 112 million adults for one day at the rate of 1 lb. per head.

Therefore, if 112 million adults fast one day, the result is the same as though we got 50,000 tons of rice from Indonesia.

Suggestion:

All adults, except the very aged, invalids and manual labourers should miss the evening meal on Saturdays.

There are 240 million adults in India, of whom 80 million are manual workers.

Therefore, if the average saving by an adult missing a Saturday evening meal is 8 oz., the total possible saving by all adults (except manual workers) missing 26 meals on 26 Saturdays during the remainder of the year would be 2080 million lbs. of cereals = ·92 million tons of cereals.

This would remove the anticipated food deficiency. All parties, all Governments and all individuals, papers, etc. should make a drive for the observance of the Saturday evening fast. The sharing by the Indian population of the starvation which is descending on parts of the country will mean in fact sharing of food.

Thus that starvation can be staved off. Besides, those who observe the fast, will in most cases gain in health.

Even if the drive achieves only a 10% success, the grain saved would be 92,000 tons — substantially more than the quantity promised from Indonesia. These 92,000 tons would have been obtained at no cost to the nation, and would represent (on the other hand) saving not only in food but in expenditure by individual families.

(From the *Daily Mail Bag*)

HARIJAN

August 18 1946

MAHADEV DESAI

(*By Jawaharlal Nehru*)

It is difficult to write about one who was a dear friend and comrade and with whom are associated so many intimate memories. As I think of him, those memories revive and the past rises up bringing a procession of pictures of days gone by.

There are so many things we take for granted, even friends. Mahadev had become some kind of an institution for many of us. Quiet, able, efficient, hard-working, forgetful of self, utterly devoted, the more one knew him, the more he grew in one's estimation and liking. For nearly a quarter of a century, we knew each other and often we worked together at common tasks. What he did, he did well and thoroughly. He had the scholar's outlook and at the same time the human touch which endears. So our affection and admiration for him grew, and when suddenly he was no more, there was a gulf and a vacuum and a feeling of desolation seized us. For one who formed so much a part of our lives and our work was no more, a dear comrade had gone and there was no one to take his place.

Yet his memory endures and cheers and strengthens us for the days of trial are not over and the future is full of difficulty. How one wishes that Mahadev was with us now with his wise and friendly counsel.

Wardha, 10-8-'46

HIS LAST ARTICLE

[This is the last article written by Mahadevbhai in the Aga Khan Palace referred to in "Mahadev Desai —The Last Phase," P.]

THE HOUSE OF TRUTHFUL LEARNING

I wonder if the above is the right name for the institution, opened by Gandhiji on the eve of his departure for Bombay, for the training of Basic Education teachers. Literally translated the name would be *The House of New Education.* But I am tempted to give it the name at the top because of the spirit in which it has been conceived. For, Shrimati Ashadevi in requesting Gandhiji to declare it open not only recited verses from the Upanishads glorifying Truth, but said that the institution would have for its foundation nothing but that Truth. The verse specially containing the pledge so to say means: "I will utter (do?) the right, I will utter the truth. May it protect me."

That was enough to provide Gandhiji with a text for his speech that day, which became of a solemn religious character. This put me in mind of a speech Gandhiji gave in Switzerland in December 1931 before an audience of devout pacifists. It was in reply to the question, 'why do you regard God as Truth?' He said:

"In my early youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as the one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe — and I think it is the truth — that God has as many names as there are creatures and, therefore, we also say that God is nameless, and since God has many forms, we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks through many tongues, we consider Him to be speechless and so on. And so, when I came to study Islam, I found that Islam too had many names of God.

"I would say with those who say 'God is Love'. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that, 'God is Truth' and 'Truth is God'. I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language (at least?) and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing (also?). I found too that love in the sense of *ahimsa* had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with Truth and (not?) even atheists had not demurred to the necessity or power of Truth. But in their passion for discovering Truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God — from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that God is Truth, I should say that Truth is God... Add to this the great difficulty, that millions have taken the name of God X and in His name committed nameless atrocities. Not that scientists very often do not commit atrocities in the name of Truth . . . Then there is another thing in Hindu philosophy, viz. God alone is and nothing else exists, and the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the *kalema* of Islam. There you find it clearly stated that God alone is and nothing else exists. In fact the Sanskrit word for Truth is a word which literally means that which exists — *Sat.* For these and several other reasons that I can give you, I have come to the conclusion that the definition — Truth is God — gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God, the only inevitable means is Love, i. e. non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately means and end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.

"Truth is what the voice within tells you. Those who would make individual search after truth as God, must go through several vows . . . If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a zero." M. D.

HIS GREATEST CHARACTER

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

The greatest characteristic I can think of about Mahadev Desai was his ability to reduce himself to zero, whenever occasion demanded it.

Sevagram, 12-8-'46

THE DISCIPLE AND HIS MASTER

A Unique Disciple

At the time of Mahadevbhai's cruel and untimely death in detention, Gandhiji was allowed to receive two condolence messages out of the hundreds that poured in from all over the country. One of these was from Shri Mathuradas Tricumji, an ex-Mayor of Bombay and a nephew of Gandhiji. There was one sentence in his letter which beautifully summed up the relationship between Bapu and Mahadevbhai. He said: "Lord Buddha had only one disciple and that was Ananda; so is the case of Mahadev with regard to you." Lord Buddha had thousands upon thousands of disciples. But Ananda towered head over shoulders above the rest. Similarly Mahadevbhai's gifts had given him a unique position among all those who have endeavoured to serve Bapu from close quarters. It is not an easy job. Mahadevbhai often used to tell me: "Living with Bapu is like living on the edge of a volcano. When the volcano will burst and blow you off, you never can tell." The reason is that Bapu towers so far above the level of all the rest, that those who surround him, often fall short of his expectations in spite of their best efforts to prove worthy disciples of the great master. Moreover, in spite of his great spiritual height, Bapu is very human. He does not expect to find perfection in those who come to him. But he does expect them to have a burning desire to attain perfection. The rate of progress that he expects from his associates varies in different cases and although he can overlook and forgive faults as big as a mountain, there are times when mere trifles assume mountainous proportions, especially in the case of those who are nearest to him.

His Life-long Prayer

Mahadevbhai told me once: "My one prayer in life has been that I may die in Bapu's service, but I am aware of the fact that at any time, I might prove unworthy of it and have to quit at a moment's notice." I did not believe him: it seemed so inconceivable to picture Bapu without him. Yet during the few years of my association with Mahadevbhai and Bapu, I saw occasions when even Mahadevbhai was at the point of quitting, as for instance at the time of the Delang incident.

From Delang, Durgaben (Mrs. Desai) and Shrimati Kasturba had gone to Jagannath Puri and there as a result of their orthodox upbringing, they felt that they ought to visit the temples. So they went inside the temples, forgetting Bapu s teaching that caste Hindus should not visit temples if they were not open to Harijans. Mahadevbhai's young son of about twelve refused to go in. He stood outside and talked to the Pujaris, trying to show them the wrong of keeping the Harijans out. On their return from Puri, the story was told by somebody. None of us thought much of it, beyond patting young Narayan (Mahadevbhai's son) on the back for his courage and wisdom beyond his years. But Bapu took a very serious view of the whole thing. He gave a talk to Ba who humbly confessed her error and apologized for it. Bapu did not blame her. "I neglected her education and I must be held responsible for her mistakes, not she." Then he took Mahadevbhai to task for neglecting Durgaben's education. "You have taken interest in Narayan, so that he knows much more than an average boy at his age. Should you not have taken the same interest in Durga's education? What is the use of your writing articles in the *Harijan* on the subject of untouchability and opening of temples to Harijans, when you do not carry the message to your own home? Ba is too old to learn, but not Durga." Mahadevbhai tried to put up some sort of defence. It made matters worse. What had seemed a trifle to us all assumed such magnitude that Mahadevbhai actually packed up his things and got ready to quit. But he had become part and parcel of Bapu himself. His utility was so great, his dedication so complete that the catastrophe (Mahadevbhai's separation from Bapu whether by death or in life could not be termed anything else except a catastrophe) was averted. God granted his prayer and Mahadevbhai served Bapu till the very end. He died in harness on the 15th of August, 1942, serving his Master and serving his country with his last breath.

Soon after Mahadevbhai's death I asked Bapu one day, "Out of all the deaths that you have been faced with so far, has not Mahadevbhai's death affected you the most?" "Jamnalal, Maganlal and Mahadev, each one of them was unique in his own line," he replied. "I consider each one of them to be irreplaceable. But I will say this, that out of the three, Mahadev had chosen to lose himself completely in me. I might say that he had ceased to have an individuality apart from mine."

A Charming Personality

Although Mahadevbhai was old enough to be my father, his mind was so young and fresh that one could never look upon him as anything except as a friend or a brother. I saw him as a small child in 1919 for the first time. My brother Pyarelal had joined Gandhiji a short time before that. I have a clear recollection of Mahadevbhai at that meeting. He had struck me as being more loving and affectionate than anybody else in Gandhiji's camp. It was this characteristic of Mahadevbhai, this ability to win over people young and old, as soon as he came in contact with them, that made him so precious in Bapu's camp. It enabled him to lighten much of Bapu's burden by settling many domestic problems around Bapu. It also enabled him to introduce some valuable workers and friends to Bapu. I remember Bapu once telling me that it was Mahadevbhai who had brought Rajaji to him.

Early Reminiscences

Practically every one of Mahadevbhai's friends felt that he cared for him or her the most. To my mother, he was dearer than a son and to me he had become more than a blood brother. Soon after I joined Gandhiji in 1938, Mahadevbhai took to going out for early morning walks along with my brother and myself. My brother later dropped out. But I kept it on. During these walks Mahadevbhai

told me many reminiscences of his early days. Little did I know that he would be going away so soon and so suddenly and I kept no record of those talks. I feel sorry for it now. He told me about his childhood and the loss of his mother at a tender age. He told me of his student days which he had spent in poverty and then as to how he had become a practising lawyer and later took to co-operative banking. Life was just becoming easy for him and his father was beginning to look forward to his own son soon becoming rich and influential, when Mahadevbhai came in contact with Gandhiji. He told me : "Bapu was just then drawing up the rules of conduct for the Ashramites. I felt deeply interested. I and Narhari used to go to the Ashram almost every evening. I had many interesting discussions on the subject with Gandhiji. I felt more and more drawn to him and his mode of life. But for some time, Bapu tried to keep me off out of regard for my wife and my father. But I persisted and at last Bapu yielded. I still remember the day when I received a brief post card from him. There was one sentence in it which made my heart leap with joy. He had said: 'I would love to have you by my side.'" Immediately he resigned from his job, broke up his household at Ahmedabad and became an inmate of the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. Whatever money he had saved was soon given over to the Ashram funds, and to the great distress of his father, Mahadevbhai took the vow of poverty.

Twentyfive Years of Selfless Service

Right from the day of his joining Bapu to the day of his death, Mahadevbhai was constantly serving Bapu. Before he came, Bapu generally had no companion when he travelled about. He did all his work himself and needed 'no looking after' as he put it. "But Mahadev soon took charge of me. He looked after my luggage, he looked after my food, he washed my clothes and he did my secretarial work."

After Mahadevbhai's death at the Aga Khan Palace, I was rather hard worked for about a month till the Government sent my brother Pyarelal from Arthur Road Prison, Bombay, to stay with us. Before he came I attended to Bapu's and Ba's massage etc., cooked their food, washed the clothes, attended to my duties as the medical officer of the camp and did whatever secretarial work there was to be done. Somebody reported to Bapu that I was being overworked. I tried to reassure him. "Please do not worry about me, Bapu. It is good for me to keep busy." "I am really not worried," said he. "If you are confident that you can manage it all, I will not think anymore about it. After all Mahadev has done more than you in his time. He did not have to attend to massage etc. and the medical duties, but he washed my clothes when I put on a huge turban, of coarse Khadi, a thick Khadi *dhoti* and a *peran* and an *angarkha*. The clothes washing that you do is child's play, compared to what Mahadev used to do. On top of that he had to cook for me, see people on my behalf, attend to the correspondence and write articles for *Young India*."

At another time Bapu told me: "One great quality of Mahadev was that he was always willing to do whatever work was entrusted to him and do it enthusiastically. Thus he became a good writer, a good cook and a good coolie. That is generally the fate of all those who come to work with me."

On that fateful morning of August the 15th, 1942, Mahadevbhai got up earlier than usual. He extracted moosambi juice for Bapu's breakfast and prepared tea and toasts for the rest of the family before we had got ready. The toasts were so nicely made that everybody complimented him on his skill. In his usual good humour he joked, "So now I will be able to get a Khansama's job anywhere." Mrs. Naidu retorted, "What is it that you are not in Bapu's household already, Khansama, bearer, secretary and what not?"

At another time Bapu said to me, "I am a good teacher. The proof is that my pupils have often outdone me in the things that I taught them." (This he was telling me in order to stimulate my interest in the study of Sanskrit which I had started learning from him in jail). I was reluctant to believe the statment. So Bapu started giving examples. "In South Africa I learned shoe-making first and taught it to others. But afterwards both Kallenbach and Maganlal made better shoes than myself. Similarly, I introduced spinning in the Ashram by learning it first myself and then teaching it to others. But now I am a back number among the spinners. Mahadev learnt it from me and he span so much better than I."

"But, Bapu, these are your side activities," I persisted. "Your chief work has been giving out original ideas and writing for *Young India* and *Harijan*." "As for giving ideas," replied Bapu, "I have some originality. But writing is a by-product. I write to propagate my ideas. Journalism is not my profession and even there, though Mahadev learned journalism from me, he came to have a more facile pen than myself."

Disciple or Son?

Bapu is different from the other great sages of the past, in so far that he has renounced the world and yet he has not renounced it. He has not ceased to love his own children, but he has extended his paternal love to all those who come in contact with him. By becoming a universal Bapu (father), he has not ceased to be Bapu to his own children, but his children cannot and do not expect from him anything more than anyone of his associates and co-workers. Thus Mahadevbhai also found in Bapu a father in every sense of the term. He told me once that shortly after his joining Bapu in 1916, they were travelling together on a very hot and sultry night. Bapu lay down to sleep and Mahadevbhai started fanning him. He was tired and soon he himself fell asleep. When he woke up, he found Bapu fanning him. The weather had been so sultry that when Mahadevbhai fell asleep and the fanning stopped, Bapu woke up. So he sat up with a fan and fanned Mahadevbhai as a mother would do for her child.

Mrs. Naidu told me once that when Mahadevbhai joined Bapu, he was so handsome and so fresh that

Bapu used to say "Mahadev is a rose". At that time Mrs. Naidu nicknamed him Ghul-e-Gujarat (The rose of Gujarat).

BAPU'S BOSWELL

In spite of his deep learning, there was a child-like simplicity about Mahadevbhai. He was versatile and he was original. His one passion in life was to lighten Bapu's burden and interpret his ideas. If Bapu took up the subject of spinning, Mahadevbhai read up all the literature available on the subject and presented the substance of his study to Bapu in the form of articles for *Young India* or *Harijan*. If Bapu took up the subject of village industries or basic education or anything else, Mahadevbhai tried to study it and get to the very bottom of it, so that he could expand the ideas put forth by Bapu and enable the public to understand him better. He recorded his utterances and kept writing a sort of biography of Bapu in the form of his weekly letters in *Young India* and *Harijan*.

Soon after his death in detention, one day Bapu expressed his grief at the separation by saying: "He aspired to be my Boswell and yet he always wished to die before me. How could he do better? So he has gone and left me to write his biography instead." What an irony of fate! "It is cruel of children to wish for death before their parents. It is selfish," he remarked on another occasion. But his philosophy came to his aid. "I may not be able to convince others, but I do feel that death is never untimely in the real sense of the term," he said. "No one dies before he or she has finished his work in this world. Mahadev had put forth the work of a century in fifty years. So he has gone to his well-earned rest."

SHADOW OF THE FAST

The shadow of Bapu's fast in detention had begun to loom large some time before the August arrests. There were discussions on the ethics of fasting in Satyagraha. They deeply distressed Mahadevbhai. He was strongly opposed to the idea of Bapu going on a fast under any circumstance. He tried to argue it with Bapu. But when Bapu told him that if he has to fast, it will be in answer to a higher call, Mahadevbhai was left without an answer. But the idea continued to oppress him. During the four days that I was with him at the Aga Khan Palace, I often heard him give expression to his anxiety on that score. He simply could not bear the idea of Bapu going on a fast. Was it the emotional strain or the consequent changes in the higher centres which resulted in a standstill of the pump on that fateful morning of the 15th of August 1942?

THE LAST ACT

Whenever Mahadevbhai got ill, he used to send for me. I sometimes joked. "You are a great man, you should have big doctors attending on you. I feel so nervous to treat you." One day he became serious. "Sushila, you are my sister. I have confidence in you and would much rather die in your hands than in the hands of anybody else." Prophetic words! Little did either of us realize at that time that such a day was fast approaching.

It was a strange coincidence which resulted in my reaching Bombay just in time to be arrested with Shri Kasturba on the 9th of August, 1942. Bapu called it a work of Providence, even a miracle. We were kept in the Arthur Road Prison at Bombay for two days and taken to the Aga Khan Palace on the 11th. Bapu was drafting his letter to the Viceroy. It was drafted more than once. Mahadevbhai had to copy it each time. Seeing me there he remarked, "You will help me with this copying, won't you?" So I made one copy. After some further alterations, the final copy was made in Mahadevbhai's beautiful handwriting, signed by Bapu and handed over to the Superintendent of the Camp on the 14th of August for posting. That night Mahadevbhai gave massage to Bapu's head. I had a cold and had retired early.

15TH AUGUST, 1942 — THE PREPARATION

As I have said already, Mahadevbhai got up earlier than usual. He had intended joining the morning prayers on that day, but was just too late for it. So he spent the time in shaving himself, clipping his moustache and his nails. Mrs. Naidu passed by as he sat in front of a full size mirror (of which there were any number in the Aga Khan Palace) performing these operations. She joked: "What is wrong with Mahadev today? He has suddenly become very particular about his appearance." No one could guess that it was for the last time.

Gandhiji used to go out for a stroll in the garden at about 7-30 every morning. On that day Mahadevbhai also joined us. "For the first time after coming here, I slept well last night and am feeling very energetic," he said. He talked of bringing out a collection of instances of non-violence in literature. Then he started talking of cases of sudden death. Years ago he had told me how his father had died suddenly. He had just become reconciled to his son having taken to a life of renunciation and was thinking of coming to stay with him for a few days. Mahadevbhai had sent him a copy of a book that he had written. He sat in an arm-chair reading the book, happy in the thought that it had been written by his son. Suddenly he put his head back and breathed his last. As I heard the story, a cold shiver ran through my spine. "I hope it won't happen with Mahadevbhai," I said to myself. I had clean forgotten the story but Mahadevbhai's talk that morning reminded me of it.

THE DRAMA ENDS

After the walk I started Bapu's massage. The I. G. P. had come and Mahadevbhai, Ba and Mira-ben had gone to Mrs. Naidu's room to meet him. From the distance we heard their laughter. Suddenly there was a lull and then somebody called me. I thought they wanted me to come and meet the I. G. P. As I was getting ready to go, Ba came in rushing, "Sushila, come quick, Mahadev is having a fit." I ran. There I found him lying in a bed looking white as marble having generalized convulsions. I learnt that as he stood talking, he had suddenly complained of feeling giddy. He was told to lie down and they had called me. I was by his side within a minute. I felt his pulse, it was not there.

I listened to his heart. There were no heart sounds. "Call Bapu," I said, and asked for some heart stimulant. The I. G. P. got for me whatever he could. I pushed in two injections, but to no effect. In the meantime Bapu had arrived. He stood by the bed-side calling out, "Mahadev, Mahadev." But for the first time Mahadev failed to answer him. "If he only opens his eyes and looks at me once, he won't go," said Bapu in anguish. But he had decided to go. He never opened his eyes. In spite of my medical knowledge, I vainly hoped that Bapu's presence might achieve what medicine had failed to do. But the age of miracles, if it ever existed, is over. The convulsions and the groans subsided. It was all over. The Civil Surgeon arrived, shook his head and went away. Ba looked at my face. "How is he? Sushila", she asked in a choked voice. What was I to say? "No more?" she asked and burst into sobs. Bapu came and consoled her. He was stricken with grief, but he had to be brave. "Let us have the prayers and then bathe the body," he said. So we sat down and recited the 18th chapter of the Gita, sang "*Vaishnava Jana To*" and then had '*Ramadhun*'. The room where Mahadevbhai had sat in the morning shaving himself was vacated of furniture etc. The body was carried to Bapu's bath room and he bathed it with my help. It was painful to see him doing it with shaking hands. Then he looked round for a moment and said: "Mahadev has died as a prisoner, he must be cremated as one." So we wrapped the body in jail sheets and brought it out. The Superintendent had got a lot of flowers. Miraben arranged them around the body most artistically. She had prepared some sandalwood paste. Bapu put it on Mahadevbhai's forehead and sat down by his side. He and I recited the Gita by turns while preparations were being made for the cremation. I noticed that Mahadevbhai's eye on the side on which Bapu was sitting was half open. It was symbolical of Mahadevbhai's deep love and devotion to Bapu. Even in death he seemed to be gazing at his Master.

The Last Rites

The authorities had brought a lorry with police and Brahmins. They wanted to take away the body and cremate it by themselves. But Bapu would not have it. "No father can hand over the body of his son to strangers," he told them. "Mahadev was more than a son to me. I would like to perform his last rites myself. But if the Government cannot take me outside, I am prepared to hand it over to friends, but I won't hand it over to the jail officials." Although the Government hands over the bodies of murderers to their relatives and friends after hanging and lets them have a public funeral, it was not prepared to allow such a thing for a rebel however non-violent. They would not hand over the body to friends and relatives. There was a tenseness in the atmosphere. We all held our breaths. What will Bapu's reply be? Bapu sat thinking for a moment. Then he said: "I do not want to make the death of my son into a political issue. If the Government will not allow me to go out and cremate the body nor hand it over to friends, I will have the cremation here." It was a novel suggestion. Nobody had ever heard of a cremation taking place in the house. The I. G. P. sat upstairs telephoning the Government of Bombay. The Government of Bombay in their turn had to consult the Government of India. At last he came down. The Government had agreed to the cremation taking place in the compound. We heaved a sigh of relief. Mrs. Naidu went downstairs to select the spot.

The I. G. P. had asked if Bapu would like to send a message to Mahadevbhai's people.. "Yes, I would like to send a telegram provided it is sent without mutilation," he replied. Then he dictated the telegram to me. He began, "Sorry." Then he stopped. "Why should I be sorry to announce such a noble death? No, scratch out "Sorry" and write, "Mahadev died suddenly . . ." The message was delivered to the I. G. P. with a request to despatch it as an express telegram. As we learnt later on, it was delivered to the addressee by post after several weeks' delay.

At last things were ready for the cremation. Bapu followed the body with a staff in one hand and the pot of fire in the other. The Brahmin chanted some *shlokas* and performed some ceremonies. The body was placed on the pier and Bapu lighted the fire. Soon there was a big blaze. Ba sat at a short distance oblivious of everything else. With folded hands she kept on repeating, "Mahadev, my child, may you be happy wherever you are. Oh! why should Mahadev have gone and not I?" The Superintendent of the Camp, the Superintendent of Yeravda prison and the I. G. P. also sat there watching the earthly remains of that beloved personality being consumed by the flames.

At last we returned to the house. It was past 5 O'clock in the evening. Death had occurred between eight and nine in the morning. "Mahadev has lived up to the 'Do or Die' *mantra*," said Bapu. "This sacrifice cannot but hasten the day of India's deliverance."

Mrs. Naidu was convinced that it was the worry about Bapu's fast that had killed Mahadevbhai. "If ever a man laid down his life for another it was Mahadev," she said. "Like Jesus Christ he died that Bapu might live. Now Bapu must give up the idea of ever going on a fast." There was no talk of a fast at that time. Things developed in such a way that a fast became inevitable, but when it did come at last, it came in a modified form, so that though Bapu went almost to death's door, he was able to survive it.

The bones and ashes were collected on the third day. A platform about seven feet by three and a half feet and about three feet high was erected on the site. A small enclosure of stones was also made. Bapu visited the *samadhi* morning and evening. Fresh flowers were placed and in the morning the twelfth chapter of Gita was recited every day. "Mahadev's whole life was an uninterrupted song of *bhakti* (devotion)", said Bapu, "and it is only befitting that we should recite *bhakti yoga* at his *samadhi*. From being a disciple, Mahadev has become my teacher. I visit his *samadhi* every day in order to keep the example of his lifelong dedication to service fresh in my mind. Let us all pray to God that we may be able to follow in his footsteps."

S. N.

MAHADEV DESAI—THE LAST PHASE

In the case of two persons, the late Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and the late Shri Mahadev Desai, the coming events of the fateful year 1942, cast very long shadows before. From the day she entered the gates of the Aga Khan Palace, Ba had a premonition that she was not going to come out of that place alive, and she never did. In the case of Shri Desai, the shadow was not that of his own approaching end but that of the danger to his Master for whom and in whom he lived and had his being. Ever since Gandhiji had hinted at the possibility of having to undertake a fast in the event of his imprisonment, the thought of it had haunted him (M. D.) like a nightmare. He struggled like a Titan to avert it. He one day asked me to go out for an evening stroll. "There is something that has been oppressing me. I want to discuss it with you," he said. "Ditto," I replied. This was not the first occasion when we had simultaneously felt the need of unburdening our minds to each other on the same subject. We discussed the pros and cons of the subject threadbare and found ourselves in complete agreement. "Now we must place our viewpoint before Bapu. I am going to do it tonight. You too must," he said to me. Accordingly two notes were prepared later and handed to Gandhiji 'according to plan'.

A WARNING SIGNAL

On our way back I chaffed him, "With all your diplomatic skill which has never failed you, can't you find a way out of the present emergency?" "We seem to be up against fate this time," he replied with a sigh. I continued the chaff. We talked about old times. But for once the smile had left his face. All of a sudden, he had an attack of giddiness and sat down by the roadside. "I don't know why, but my mind suddenly went blank," he said to me. The giddiness, however, passed away as quickly as it had come. But when we reached his house, the pulse was very rapid and feeble and the blood pressure extremely low. We did not know then that it was a mild onset of ventricular failure — what in medical books is described as Stokes Adam's syndrome, accentuated by excessive mental strain which was finally to claim him a couple of months later.

In the meantime the prospect of the 'Quit India' struggle continued to fill the air. It was going to be a "Do or Die" struggle, in which no quarter could be expected or asked for. Mahadev Desai was aware of it. He decided to get himself overhauled medically. Had not Gandhiji taught that for a Satyagrahi, to fall ill in jail was a shame? He was anxious to give a good account of himself in prison in the coming struggle for Independence, the biggest and the most momentous in the country's history. He dragged me too along with him to Bombay, although I was most unwilling. "A sacred duty cannot be evaded. Bapu will need us all this time. We must keep ourselves fit," he remonstrated. Without even telling me, he made an appointment for me with a leading pathologist. Himself he went through a series of tests, minus alas! the heart. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was going the next day to Wardha for the Working Committee meeting and wanted to discuss certain things with him on the way. The heart examination had to be given the go-bye.

THE LAST JOURNEY

Gandhiji's date of departure for Bombay had been fixed for the 5th of August. Mahadev Desai made thorough preparation for a hazardous Odyssey, cleared his desk and sent away to safe places important documents, diaries, note books etc., the honey distilled during a life time with a diligence exceeding that of the bee in the fable. He took his son with him to Bombay. The latter had resisted all proposals for a university education made by his father's numerous friends, including the late Shri Bhulabhai Desai. The father felt that he had nothing more precious to give to the boy than to initiate him into the historic August struggle. There had been a function in the Talimi Sangh at Sevagram, on the 4th, in which Gandhiji had spoken. Mahadev Desai made the young Narayan write out the Hindustani report of Gandhiji's address on the train and had the great satisfaction to find that the boy had not done it unworthily. He carefully whetted it and afterwards told me that he had awarded 75 per cent marks to Narayan for the performance.

The next three days were full of hectic excitement and ceaseless strain for everybody. A chance encounter with M. A. Mecklai who was an old friend of his, provided an opportunity for a last, eleventh hour, though abortive, peace effort. The correspondence relating to that effort has since been published and is now public property.

8TH OF AUGUST AT LAST

We were attending the A. I. C. C. meeting. Suddenly he turned to me. "No one knows what may happen tonight," he said. "All sorts of rumours are in the air. Bapu made a very important speech yesterday and will make another today. Much may depend on accurate reporting of the two speeches. Let us take no chance. You do yesterday's speech just now. I shall see to today's speech when we go home."

But when I saw him later after the A. I. C. C. meeting at about 11-O'clock at night, he was still occupied by visitors. He had been unable to steal even a moment's respite.

"Well, the die is cast. What shall we do now?" I asked.

"Bapu is sure to be arrested. Well, we shall issue forth tomorrow hand-in-hand and do something worthy."

Young Narayan and Kanu Gandhi had encountered him about half an hour ago. "We are no longer going to listen to you now, Kaka," the former said laughing. "Bapu said in the A. I. C. C. today that everybody was hereafter to be his own leader. We are now *azad*."

"But you have already anticipated Bapu and I you," replied Mahadevbhai. "My dear boy, I have no wish to take away your *azadi*."

Little did the boy realize that he was going to be independent of his father in a way nobody suspected — he least of all.

They Come

What followed is best told in his own words as recorded in the pages of his journal found among his posthumous papers:

"9-8-'42. After the morning prayer I said to Bapu: 'There has been a spate of rumours and telephone messages, all to the effect that the arrests will take place tonight. Shri Arvind Pakwasa has further brought the news that barbed wire fence has been put up round the Aga Khan Palace where the detenus will be taken.' Mecklai even told me, 'You will be going to a lovely place. I myself would love to be there. I will go there to visit you.' Bapu said. "After my last night's speech they will never arrest me." But I feel ill at ease. I tried to get news about the Sardar on the telephone. The line was dead. Fear gripped me. I sent Swami Anand to try the telephone from the next bungalow. He quickly returned with the news that the Police Commissioner was coming to make arrests. The Police Superintendent came and made the arrests. There were warrants for Miraben and myself with offer to take Pyarelal and Ba into voluntary detention with Bapu. A special was waiting at the station. The whole of the Working Committee group and the members of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee had already been taken into it.

"We were taken down at Chinchwad. The members of the Working Committee were made to get down first. In the course of a conversation with the Maulana and Jawahar a reference came up as to fast. They recognized it as a final step. Jawahar raised the point as to why secrecy was incompatible with *ahimsa*. "You are free to interpret *ahimsa* in your own way," replied Bapu.

"At Chinchwad Station we were taken into a motor car. Others were made to go into a lorry. Sorrow and grief were written large on Bapu's face. It was accentuated by the way in which Mehta was treated. They caught hold of him by his hands and feet and carried him to the lorry where a sergeant pushed him in.

"On reaching the palace I began to give Bapu a massage: "After how many long years are you doing it?" Bapu asked. He slept for one and a half hours during *malish* and again at noon. He then began writing the letter to the Viceroy which he showed to me at night. But my eyes were heavy with sleep. At 9.25 he took silence.

Six Days in the Aga Khan Palace

"10-8-'42. Several further corrections were made in that draft. A second letter to Lumley was written about the sergeant and for newspapers. The letter was drafted once, twice, thrice. All of us suggested that the Mehta incident should not be over-emphasized.

"The Civil Surgeon came. Bapu's blood pressure stood at 142/88, weight 104 lbs.

"I suggested that Lumley's letter should be posted next day. It was decided that the other letter should be held over for further consideration.

"The goat did Satyagraha. Bapu said it would not be right to take her milk under the circumstances. Miraben had some difficulty in persuading him.

"11-8-'42. While the letter was being revised, Ba and Sushila arrived. They brought a lot of news. The whole day we talked of the happenings outside. Lumley's letter was posted in the evening. At night Bapu described his experiences with Jones, Dalziel, etc. I had a talk with Col. Shah.

"12-8-'42. After making several further alterations in the Viceroy's letter, I gave it to Sushila to make a fair copy of it. "If Government gives me 7 years, I shall be able to do a lot," said Bapu. I reminded him of what Satyamurti had said: "Bapu, your real work will begin after India has got her Independence."

"13-8-42. I jotted down several more suggestions in the copy of the letter to the Viceroy made by Sushila. Bapu read through it again. Two or three sentences were altered for clarification at Miraben's suggestion. Bapu asked the meaning of 'teleology' in "teleological connection between bourgeois democracy, revolution and industrialism". This led to a lot of discussion on teleology. Finally Bapu said: "In other words, it amounts to arguing in a circle." Then there was a discussion as to whether the preposition 'with' or 'of' should follow 'reek'. He asked Sushila the meaning of 'varicose veins' and the derivation of the word 'varicose'. The two letters were addressed to L. and L. (Lord Lumely and Lord Linlithgow). 'It only needs H. E. before the two Ls (HELL),' remarked Mrs. Naidu.

"Sushila wrote a prescription for Ba. The Superintendent was about to send it to the chemist. I said to Bapu: "He is sending the prescription with Ba's name on top. It is like sending out the news that Ba is here and is ill. Bapu said: "You should warn the Superintendent and ask him to strike off the names if he wants to." The Superintendent was very grateful for the suggestion. He struct off the names and sent the prescription to the chemist.

"I made a toaster out of stray pieces of wire. Bapu asked: "What is the Gujarati equivalent of 'Necessity is the mother of invention'." I suggested: ગરજ એ શોધની જનતા છે.

"14-8-'42. The letter to the Viceroy was posted.

"Today we asked for news about Sardar and Pyarelal. The reply was: 'There is no report about Sardar.' So he must be presumed to be well. He did not know whether Pyarelal was in Poona or not."

The Journey's End

Here the Journal abruptly ends bringing to a close thirty years' sustained and unremitting labour. The life's candle was snuffed out on the morning of the 15th. The only other person whom I have known to be as punctual in keeping a day-to-day and hour-to-hour ledger of his life was the late Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj. The last entry in his diary was made just before he left for his daughter-in-law's house in Wardha never to return.

I was taken to the Aga Khan Palace exactly one month after Mahadev's death. Among his papers, along with the leaves of his journal reproduced above, there was the report of Gandhiji's last public utterance before the Talimi Sangh Teachers' Camp at Sevagram on the 5th. He could

not take it up at Bombay while the A. I. C. C. session was on. So he did it at the first opportunity on reaching the Aga Khan Palace.

Remained Bapu's A.I.C.C. speeches. "Have you done Bapu's A. I. C. C. speech of the 7th?" he had asked me on the morning of the 9th August just before his arrest. "I am only half way through," I had replied. "And you?" I asked referring to the other speech he was to do. "Could not even touch it owing to telephone calls which kept me awake till 2 a. m.," he replied and thrust his notebook containing notes of his speech into my hands as he passed out of Gandhiji's room to meet the police commissioner who had come with warrants of arrest. But he was not the one to leave behind him even the unpaid debt of a "cock I owe to Asclepius." During his six days' detention he had done from memory the skeleton of Gandhiji's two A. I. C. C. speeches of the 7th and 8th August and a better skeleton of a speech I have yet to see.

His association with Gandhiji was to him a probation and discipline in life. As Gandhiji with great penetration observed, what his soul thirsted for was a devotional spirit. "It was in furtherance of that quest he came to me and not finding full satisfaction even with me (shall I say) he turned his back on me in the fulness of youth . . . to seek the realization of his quest in the bosom of his Maker."

"I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn,
For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
This imports solely, man should mount on each
New height in view.

. . . .

And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's and not the beasts': God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be."

(*Death in the Desert*)

Sevagram, 12-8-'46 PYARELAL

Horse Racing

I have written before regarding the ruination of men and money through horse racing but a very strongly-worded letter from a friend who says that gambling on the race course is not a lesser evil than the drink habit, constrains me to write again on this subject. The writer further says:

> "Special trains are run for the races and are full of people who wear Gandhi caps, call themselves Congressmen and go there only to waste their money. Where does this money come from? We now have popular Ministries, but they too are silent and put up with the evil."

Although, in my opinion, gambling at races is not as great an evil as drinking of alcohol, one ought not really to draw comparisons. Less bad does not make gambling a good thing. I do not know all the intricacies of horse racing. All I can say is that if it is within the competence of a popular Government to put an end to the evil, it should certainly do so.

Sevagram, 9-8-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*) M. K. G.

THE LIMIT OF INSANITATION

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Panchgani is a fine hill resort. The air itself is like medicine. Rajas and Maharajas do not frequent it like they do Mussooree and yet there has been no place where the poor could stay. Now at last if there is going to be a small haven for them, it would only be a tardy reparation. But if the present insanitary conditions continue, Panchgani will cease to exist as a health resort. I believe, the same is true of Mahabaleshwar too. I am of opinion that such conditions are due to our own fault, rather than to that of Government. I have heard doctors say that everyone knows how to observe personal cleanliness up to a point, but our people do not seem to know the A B C of hygiene and sanitation. The truth of this has to be admitted with sorrow. The following is a vivid account of Dr. Dinshah Mehta's observations regarding the lack of proper sanitary arrangments in Panchgani. I give it in the fervent hope that this disgraceful state of affairs will be remedied without undue delay:

"Dr. Savant accompanied me on the 19th July to the place, where the refuse of Panchgani is deposited. It is behind Sydney Point, about half a mile off the main road and one and a half miles from Panchgani Bazar. The main road passes in front of the Parsi Boys' School and because the wind happened to be blowing strongly in that direction, the smell was wafted right up to that spot. Sydney Point itself is a beautiful situation and if there were no nasty odours, the air would be health-giving. But no one goes there nowadays, even though a small motor road has been built. Only the grass blows in the wind. There are two houses just below the Point, but I was told that they remain vacant because of the stench, mosquitoes and flies.

"The garbage of Panchgani is all thrown by the side of the road and was lying there in large open heaps. It would be strange, if it were not full of germs and covered with flies.

"A little further on, I saw nightsoil in trenches. Four of these, each 10'×5'×3' were full. Some were empty. It appears that sweepers are too lazy and careless even to see that the nightsoil is actually thrown into the trenches. Much was lying outside. And I was told that if anyone remonstrates with them about this or any other matter, they go on strike. The Municipality and residents of Panchgani have, therefore, meekly to submit. Local sweepers refuse to allow outside scavengers to enter Panchgani.

"I have not yet been able to rid my nose and eyes of the smell and the nauseating sight. Anyone who goes there to inspect, must train these organs to stand the trial. On return he should take a bath and then go to sleep, in order to rest both mind and stomach or else he will have to send for a doctor!

"In order to improve the dreadful conditions, I submit the following suggestions:

1) All garbage and nightsoil should be properly thrown into trenches and covered over with at least double the quantity of clean earth,

2) or all should be burnt in an incinerator,

3) or septic tanks should be constructed and the overflow of water from these, should be used for the cultivation of a public vegetable garden,

4) or it should be made compulsory for every house-owner to build a septic tank in this domain. Used bath water can be employed for flushing these tanks. Standard plans for the construction of such tanks can be had from military contractors,

5) or a scheme for drainage and a pumping station should be undertaken. But for this, sufficient water is an essential. The water works scheme which the Panchgani Municipality has under consideration, would have first to come into being.

"The last is the most important and best suggestion but it requires both money and time. Meanwhile the least that can be done is to act forthwith on my first and second proposals."

Poona, 1-8-'46
(From *Harijanbandhu*)

Notes

South Africa

The heroic struggle of the Indian settlers in South Africa continues with unabated zeal. It promises to be prolonged. The longer the resisters are made to suffer, the greater will be their glory and reward. It is true of all long suffering. What the Government of the Union of South Africa has done so deliberately is not going to be changed suddenly, even for the sufferings of the brave men and women. This is said not to damp the zeal of the fighters but to steel them for greater and longer suffering. Their spokesmen when they were in India were told in plain language that they must not expect the struggle to close quickly. Time runs always in favour of the sufferer, for the simple reason that tyranny becomes more and more exposed as it is continued. In reality it is never long. Sufferers need never lose hope whether their struggle appears to have a longer lease of life or shorter, when the result is a certainty.

Goa

The Goan authorities are going on merrily with their 'humanizing' activities by gagging the people of Goa. The latest instance is that of their 'court martial' sentencing Shri Braganza Cunha to eight years and deporting him to a far off Portuguese settlement in Africa for the crime of daring to assert his elementary right of civil liberty. Well has the Working Committee passed a resolution in condemnation of the policy of the Goan authorities which stands in striking contrast to the action of the French Governor who has encouraged the people to throw in their lot with the people in British India.

Sevagram, 12-8-'46 M. K. G.

COMPENSATION FOR MURDER

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

I have been asked whether the brother or other near relatives of the late Bhai Rajabali should demand compensation in money from Government for his murder. The deceased himself would not have counted such a death as loss. As a matter of fact, it is murders such as this which, if wholly unavenged, will ultimately put an end to murder. The moment any compensation or revenge is sought, the good of the willing sacrifice is wiped out. And how then could the spirit of the deceased rest in peace ?

Murder can never be avenged by either murder or taking compensation. The only way to avenge murder is to offer oneself as a willing sacrifice, with no desire for retaliation. Those who believe in this premise will never dream of demanding or taking any compensation for the loss of their dear ones. The principle of taking of life for life will, on the contrary, only lead to an increase of murders. This is apparent to all today. Revenge or compensation may furnish some satisfaction to the individual, but I am quite definite that it can never restore peace to or uplift society.

The question arises as to what the individual should do in a society where revenge is the rule. The answer lies not in precept but in example. And those alone can set the example who have been wronged. Therefore, the final decision must rest with Bhai Rajabali's relatives. My duty lay in pointing them the way of *ahimsa* as I know it.

Sevagram, 9-8-'46
(From *Harijanbandhu*)

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